

Section 8 Procedure: Supervision of offenders and those who pose risk

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Risk assessments

Research has indicated that a higher proportion of convicted offenders against children may be found in church congregations than in the population generally. It is therefore probable that many congregations will have people who have abused children amongst their worshippers, some of whom will be known. Not all will have committed sexual offences; some will have been guilty of neglect, physical or emotional abuse. Ministry to such people brings a particular responsibility that the safety of children is not compromised. If a congregation is generally aware of how offenders will be treated, it will be easier to manage specific cases confidentially if they should occur.

As well as people with convictions against children there are others whose position in a congregation may need to be carefully and sensitively considered to decide whether they pose a risk. This would include people convicted of violent or sexual offences against adults, including domestic violence and people involved in drug or alcohol misuse; some adults with mental health issues, and with particular special needs which may result in erratic behaviour.

In all circumstances where you are concerned that an adult or a child may pose a risk to children or adults who may be vulnerable, please contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) at the earliest possible stage, in order that an appropriate risk assessment can be carried out.

I Assessing risk for those known to have sexually abused children

Anyone who has been found guilty of sexual offences against children since the Sex Offenders Act 1997 will be on the Sex Offenders Register, and therefore known to the police.

If you are informed by a statutory agency (this may be your local Police Public Protection Team (Jigsaw Team) or Probation Service) that a known sexual offender wishes to join your church, or is already a member of your church, then contact the DSA before you take any action, and pass on the details of the officer who has contacted you. S/he will then work with you to draw together a meeting which will include parish representatives (usually the incumbent, churchwardens, the Parish Safeguarding Officer) the referring officer from the statutory services and the offender.

At that meeting, s/he will guide those present through an assessment of the risks posed by the offender in the particular environment of your church worship and activities. The statutory agency will already have carried out a risk assessment on the person, which will be taken fully into account. A plan for the person's inclusion in the church will be drawn up, and the DSA will co-ordinate the instigation of the plan.

See section 8
(Management &
Agreements)

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2 Assessing risk for those who pose risk but are not sexual offenders

You may be concerned that someone who is not a sexual offender against children nevertheless may pose a risk, in circumstances such as the following:

- they have an offence for violent or sexual offences against adults
- an allegation of abuse against a child or adult has been investigated, but the matter has not proceeded to court, or the person has been acquitted
- a person has demonstrated erratic behaviour which is actually or potentially violent or a risk to children or adults who may be vulnerable; this may be due to substance misuse, a mental disorder or a disability
- a complaint or grievance has been received alleging inappropriate behaviour, which is not criminal.

In such circumstances, consult with the DSA, who may arrange for an assessment of the risk by someone independent of the parish.

Assessment of risk of clergy or church officers is the responsibility of the diocese, working in consultation with the parish. The DSA will set up the procedures for this, which may include the commissioning of a risk assessment by an agency independent from the diocese.

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Management and agreements**P**

When it is known that a member of the congregation, or someone wishing to join the congregation, has sexually abused a child or young person, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser must be consulted, so that a safe course of action can be agreed in conjunction with the relevant statutory agencies. Because of the compulsive nature of child sexual abuse, it is expected that a written agreement will be entered into with the offender, and the situation reviewed regularly.

A risk assessment on someone who poses risk but is not a sexual offender may identify safeguarding action which should be taken in order to minimise the risks to vulnerable people. This might include entering into a written agreement with the person concerned.

See section 8 (Risk assessment)

Written agreements

Written agreements are made through a meeting usually chaired and co-ordinated by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, which includes representatives of the church, the person who poses risk and his/her supporter, and any statutory agency who has been involved in the investigation.

Purpose

A written agreement is made primarily to reduce and minimise the risk to children and adults. The agreement also aims to create a safe environment for the person posing risk, through protecting them from false allegations and the risk of re-offending, supporting them and enabling them to receive appropriate ministry within explicit bounds of confidentiality.

Who is involved

A reference group will be set up in the church, whose purpose will be to monitor the agreement, as well as provide support to the person posing risk.

Where the police or probation service are involved, they will be consulted and in some cases party to the agreement, and there will be an agreement to pass information about the person who poses risk in both directions.

Ministry to the person posing risk

The agreement will make clear how the person who poses risk can receive ministry and support.

See section 7

Boundaries of involvement

The agreement will set clear boundaries on the person's involvement in the church community, in order to minimise risk. Depending on the seriousness of the risk, limits may include:

- which services the person may attend
- whether s/he should be accompanied, and if so, by whom
- where s/he may sit
- what activities s/he may participate in

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- what activities s/he is barred from; this is likely to include all direct and unsupervised work with children and young people, any official role or office in the church which gives him or her the status or authority deemed to be trustworthy
- other limits on his/her behaviour, and agreements about how his/her behaviour will be managed.

In circumstances where, for instance the victim is also part of the church community, or the church is one with a large number of children, the person posing the risk may be introduced to a congregation in another parish.

Enforcement, duration and review

The agreement must be enforced and monitored, with no manipulation allowed.

It must remain in place for as long as the person is a part of the congregation.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser maintains a database of offenders for whom agreements are in place in the diocese, and ensures that such agreements are reviewed at least annually.

In the event of the agreement being broken, statutory agencies must be informed, and the DSA consulted in order to decide what further safeguards need to be put in place, and whether the person should continue as part of that congregation.